97-84107-19

Woman's League for the Protection of Riverside...

A prophecy of twenty-three years ago comes true

[New York]

[1916]

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A Prophecy of Twenty-three Years Ago Comes True

Editorials Regarding Riverside Park Published Years Ago Read as if Written To-Day

Woman's League for the Protection of Riverside Park

MRS. CHARLES A. BRYAN, President

(EDITORIAL)

(*The New York Sun*, October 15, 1893.)

WISDOM IN TIME

Preserve the People's Rights—The Water Front of Public Parks.

Unlike most other great capitals, New York sits directly on the seashore, the foremost maritime city in the world. There are a hundred miles of coast line. Commerce has the first claim on these hundred miles of water front, but no one will dispute that some of it should be saved for the pleasure and refreshment of the people. * * *

No city in the world can point to a park more beautiful for situation than Riverside, and, although the railroad which runs along its border is a disfigurement, the broad, strong river, with the wooded heights beyond and the magnificent views up and down its course give the work a character for dignity and stateliness which is quite its own. **It would hardly be supposed that any citizen of New York could be so lacking in public spirit and civic pride as to be willing to see this park sacrificed for any consideration,** and yet it has been proposed more than once by the Dock Department to build piers and sheds in front of Riverside Drive, and thereby to destroy the whole place as a pleasure ground, by substituting for the restful quiet of its scenery the noise and stench and confusion of dock traffic. The propriety of such a desecration might be argued if there were not abun-

dant facilities elsewhere for all the commerce of this port; **but as the growing city is crowding upon every foot of ground devoted to public use, in the same way hungry eyes are fastened upon every inch of water front which can be had for nothing.** The Dock Department has just made an effort to confiscate this water front, but it was confronted by such a determined opposition by the people whose rights were to be invaded that the plans were temporarily withdrawn. **No doubt another attack** will be organized, **and another and another**, under some plausible pretext, but for the present the Riverside front is safe.

August, 1916.—A new attack has been made and the Riverside front is again threatened.

(EDITORIAL)

(*The New York World*, September 29, 1893.)

SAVE THE RIVERSIDE PARK

To-day at the meeting of the Sinking Fund Commissioners the elaborate plans of the Dock Commissioners for future improvements, including the alleged improvement of the water front of Riverside Park, will be considered.

Concerning the rest of their schemes, there is no great public interest. Concerning the Riverside Park matter, there is special interest on the west side and much interest all over the city. It is a matter affecting the rights and pleasure of the whole people. The parks are public property maintained for the common enjoyment of all. How jealous the people are of any infringement upon their commons was shown when it was attempted to devote a wide strip of the Central Park to a race course. The protest against injury to the Riverside Park should not be less formidable.

The water front of the Riverside Park may be improved in a manner to enhance the beauty and value of this pleasure ground or in a manner to destroy its most attractive and characteristic feature—the prospect of the noble river and the opposite heights. To accomplish the first-mentioned and the altogether desirable result the river shore, and in a degree the river itself, must be regarded and treated as a part of the park and reserved from every use foreign to that purpose.

But this idea and purpose are wholly foreign to the peculiar office of the Dock Commissioners. * * * **Shall the splendid possibilities of the beautiful Riverside Park be irrevocably given over to their despoiling greed and ambition?**

(*The New York World*, August 17, 1893.)

SHALL THE RIVER FRONT BE TAKEN?

Riverside Park's Future to Be Settled at a Hearing September 18.

The question whether the Dock Department shall be allowed to seize the North River water front facing Riverside Park, and improve it for commercial purposes, or whether it shall be made a part of Riverside Park, will come before the Sinking Fund Commissioners on September 18. The park extends from 72d Street to 129th Street, a distance of nearly three miles, and the water front is one of its greatest beauties. The Dock Board has prepared a plan for the improvement of the river front from 72d to 100th Street, with a broad exterior street and the usual docks and piers, and has asked the Sinking Fund Commissioners to approve the plan.

Comptroller Myers, in a report on the Dock Board's plan, calls attention to the beauty of Riverside Park and to the opportunity of adding greatly to its attractiveness by extending it to the water's edge. If the river front is devoted to commercial purposes, he says, this opportunity will be lost forever, and the beauty of the park and of Riverside Drive will be greatly diminished. There will be an interesting fight between the Dock Board and the west side property owners when the public hearing takes place.

And still we find the Dock Department just as insistent to-day as of yore.

(*The New York World*, August 20, 1893.)

COVET RIVERSIDE PARK

It has been suggested that the real purpose of the Dock Commissioners was to move the great ocean steamship lines there. This appears to have been the idea in the mind of Chief Engineer Green, of that department, when he said: "The land adjacent to Riverside Park in a few years will be very valuable for dock purposes. The river is very deep all along there and the largest ocean steamships can land. The Central Railroad Company has the right to run a spur to every dock built, and freight can be transferred without rehandling between railroad cars and steamships. The land will be much more valuable as used by the Dock Department than if made a part of the park. It would

be very expensive to make this land an addition to the park, owing to the presence of the railroad tracks."

This utterance of the engineer suggests very forcibly that the powers behind the throne in this movement to grab the park front for commercial purposes are the great corporations like the ocean steamship companies and the Standard Oil and New York Central and Hudson River Railroad companies. It certainly would be convenient for them, and the experience of the past shows that they generally get what they want. **Shall they be allowed to despoil the Riverside Park, which has cost the city millions of dollars to lay out, and which, from its situation and topography, is susceptible of being made one of the most beautiful parks in the world?**

Citizens, remember, this was written in 1893—twenty-three years ago this month.

(EDITORIAL)

(*New York Tribune*, January 17, 1894.)

THE RIVERSIDE PARK IMPROVEMENT

The agreement of the city departments having authority in the matter upon a plan for the development of the Riverside Park is gratifying and commendable, for their scheme of improvement is well devised. * * *

We are glad to see that there is no inclination in any quarter to consider the foolish suggestion that the Hudson River Railroad tracks be transferred to the water line, for the sake of unifying the park territory. It would be better if the tracks were not there, but since they cannot be removed altogether they ought to be left where they are. The acquisition and maintenance of the river front for the use of the people constitute an indispensable element of the plan of extension and improvement. **So far as possible the railroad tracks should run through a sunken way and be further concealed by shrubbery.** Artistic treatment of this difficulty is entirely practicable, and must be insisted on. * * *

You can help to save RIVERSIDE PARK NOW, either by writing a letter of protest to the Mayor or by joining our League. Dues $1. Miss Georgie Wayne Day, Treasurer, Greenwich, Conn.

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